

# *How can I find God ?*

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*by the Reverend*  
**Maurice A. P. Wood**  
**D.S.C., M.A.**



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# How can I find God?

*by the Reverend*

**Maurice A. P. Wood, D.S.C., M.A.**

*Principal of Oak Hill College*

A Sermon broadcast by the B.B.C.  
on Sunday, August 15th, 1954,  
from St. Mary's Church, Islington, London

# FOREWORD

*by the Archbishop of Sydney*

THE MOST REVEREND HUGH GOUGH, O.B.E.

There is a very great need today for booklets such as this, explaining in simple language how a man can become a real Christian and rejoice in a daily experience of God. These "Islington Booklets" meet just this need and are written simply and clearly, and will prove a help to many.

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## *How can I find God?*

**I** WAS driving back from Devon in my car a few weeks ago, and I stopped for petrol near Honiton. The garage proprietor himself served me, and then he poked his head into the car, and said, "Hello, Padre, weren't you with us on the beaches near Ouistreham and the Caen Canal in the invasion of Normandy on D-Day?" Memories rushed back, and we chatted till an impatient line of cars behind me made further conversation impossible—and bad for trade, I suppose! As he waved me off, he said, "I shall never forget that first service on the beach on the Sunday after D-Day".

His words stuck in my memory. I remembered many services that I had taken, and I thought of the thousands and thousands of men and women in the Services, and on the Home Front, who, faced with danger and loneliness and anxiety for their loved ones, had stretched out their hands to God in those days of crisis and danger.

Have you tried to find God in times of stress like that, or perhaps in time of personal sorrow, or personal joy, but somehow the telephone of prayer has gone dead in your hand, and you seem to be away from God, even though you want Him? Remember that God has no favourites. He wants you to find Him, and life will honestly make no sense until you do find Him. If you are really

serious about this, will you give me your undivided attention for fifteen minutes, while I show you the three simple steps that the Bible tells us are necessary to bring us to God ?

## SEARCHING FOR GOD

Come with me in imagination to the seaside at Galilee. It's a glorious sunny morning, and Jesus Christ is just beginning His first recorded sermon (St. Mark 1. 14). The fishermen are standing round Him. He has just come from the fierce temptation in the wilderness. He knows the worst that the world, the flesh and the Devil can do to spoil and mar men's lives and consciences and relationships. He is right *in* our world, yet He never sinned. Now listen to His voice.

“ Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying . . . Repent ye, and believe the Gospel ” (St. Mark 1. 14, 15). Here are the first two steps: “ Repent, and believe the Gospel ”.

## REPENT

What does it mean to repent ? Well, it doesn't mean just turning over a new leaf every now and again, and hoping that God will accept our lives as they are, without any further alterations. It is more than that. The Bible says in its blunt, old-fashioned way, “ ALL have sinned and come short of the glory of God ” (Romans 3. 23). The Bible tells us that we are sinners by our actions, which are all known

to God. They are all recorded. By thought, word and deed we have sinned, and only a very proud or stupid man denies this. The Bible tells us that the wages of sin is death, or eternal separation from God (Romans 6. 23). Sin not only separates us from God, but it blinds us, so that we do not realize what a terrible thing it is to go out into eternity without Christ, and to be judged by God because of our sins.

In addition, we have a sinful nature that draws us away from life at its best, and at times is so powerful that we do things and say things, and secretly think things that in our better moments appal us. Then again, we are sinners by our attitude, if we are living our lives outside the control of Christ, because He calls us, by His tremendous love which led Him to the Cross, to yield our wills to Him, and we are too lazy, or muddle-headed, or proud, or too confused by wrong ideas, or held by evil and selfish habits, to turn from our sins to Jesus.

Yet that is exactly what repentance means. We acknowledge that in God's sight, in comparison with the perfect example of Jesus, we simply are not good enough for God. This does not mean, however, that God simply wants us to turn over a new leaf, and attempt to patch up our lives until we think we are good enough for God. We can never do that. First, we must acknowledge we are sinners (Psalm 51. 3). Secondly, we must confess our sins to God (1 John 1. 9). Thirdly, we must turn from any clearly sinful course of action in our lives, and

this may even mean making restitution for past wrong actions. The older we grow, the more difficult it is to repent.

Are you willing to do this? The battle often rages here. I wish I could help you personally at this point, but remember there is no avoidance of Christ's simple word "Repent". Will you hold this word in your mind, while we look together at the second step?

### BELIEVE CHRIST DIED FOR YOU

After telling us to repent, Jesus said, "Believe the Gospel." Now "belief" is a difficult word, and some people say, "Well, of course, I haven't got very much faith." Now let's get this clear. It is not the amount of faith that matters—it is the direction of it. Christian Faith means putting your trust and confidence in a Person. That Person is Jesus Christ Himself. We have to believe that He is what He claims to be. Jesus is God come down to this world, living a truly human life, but never being less than Divine. In St. John 20. 31, St. John told us that he wrote his Gospel so that we might come to believe in Jesus as God's Son.

Secondly, we have to believe that He died to save us. What does this mean? St. Peter put it clearly when he spoke of Christ, "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2. 24). Peter also said, "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3. 18). The



death of the Son of God on the Cross took place at a moment of time, but it is timeless in its effect. His death is central in history. At the Cross, God laid upon His Son Who was sinless, the guilt and penalty of the sins of all men. St. Paul summed up the Gospel when he said, "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15. 3). God in His justice condemns our sins, but in His love and mercy He provides forgiveness for them through the precious death of His Son on our behalf. God the Father planned it. In full co-operation, God the Son effected it, and God the Holy Spirit makes the death of Christ personal to us as we respond to His promptings.

### COMMIT YOURSELF TO CHRIST

It is not enough just to know the fact that the Lord Jesus died to save us from our sins, so as to bring us to Heaven. The word "believe" in St. John's Gospel is sometimes translated "commit", and God calls us to the brave experiment of committing our hearts and souls to Christ. Have you ever consciously yielded that central citadel of your soul to God? Have you ever put the wheel in His hand so that He may steer the ship of your life? I remember, during the war, when the Royal Marine Commandos, to which I was attached as Chaplain, were invading the Island of Walcheren, that our Landing Craft was hit by shells from the shore batteries. I had to get ashore, because I was the only Anglican Chaplain with the Commando

Brigade at that particular time, and I well remember my Marine Officer-Attendant, or "batman", lowering an old-fashioned life-belt from the bows of the craft to me in the water. I pressed on the side of it, it came over my shoulders, I put my arms through it and rested on it, and swam off to join the rest of the unit. On that day, I moved over from a theoretical belief in life-belts to an experimental trust in one life-belt. In the same way, we need to *commit* our lives to the Lord Jesus, if we have never done so before. We must repent of our sins, believe that Jesus died to save us, and then, in the third step that Christ gave to His early disciples, we must come to Him.

### HOW CAN I COME TO CHRIST ?

Now at this point there is a difficulty. Often people say to me, "Mr. Wood, I want to be a *real* Christian, but how exactly can I consciously and personally come to Christ?" This is an all-important question, because the Bible tells us that the Lord Jesus Christ is the one and only Mediator who can bring us to God (1 Timothy 2. 5). The Christian claim is an exclusive one. Doing your best, trusting to luck, or trusting to any other person will not bring you to God. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me" (St. John 14. 6). How, then, can we come to Him? In the Revelation of the Lord Jesus to St. John the Divine, we have one verse that makes it very clear.

The Lord Jesus says to us, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3. 20).

The Lord Jesus stands outside our life as a friend might stand outside our home. Holman Hunt's picture of "The Light of the World" shows Him standing there knocking on a great door. Growing outside it are weeds and briars, symbolizing the emptiness and fruitlessness of life without Christ. On His head is the crown of thorns, reminding us that it was on the Cross that He suffered and died for our sins. The handle is on the inside of the door, showing us that we alone can open the door of our hearts and welcome Him in. I know in my own experience that to open the door of one's heart to Christ is to find life at its best, and once we have truly received Him, life will never be the same again. I remember a young man at Oxford saying to me, "For too long I have allowed Christ to be in the garden of my intellect. I see that I must welcome Him into the house of my soul." Will you come to Christ like this, this very day?

Jesus won a great victory upon the Cross, when He died there to bear away your sins and to bring you to God, and to give you life at its best now, and life eternal hereafter. Let His love win a new victory in your own life today. When you receive Him you become at peace with God (Ephesians 2. 13-17), and you will soon discover the many differences which Christ can make in your life. Will you

decide, wherever you may be, as you read this booklet, that you will come to Christ this very day? You will never regret it. To find Christ is to find God's best for your life.

## THE COST

To accept Christ as Saviour will mean changes in your way of living. As C. S. Lewis says in his book, *Miracles*, "It is a sort of Rubicon. One goes across; or not. But if one does, one may be in for anything." The same Lord Jesus Who offers pardon and peace, and strength and purpose to you, also asks for your loyalty and your service.

To ask the Lord Jesus into your heart is a very costly thing to do. It is not "a flash in the pan", but a decision for a lifetime. When we receive Christ by faith as our Saviour, we must recognize what should follow. We must worship Him in the fellowship of His Church (Acts 2. 41-47), witness for Him in our home and in our daily lives (Romans 10. 9, 10) and work for Him out of gratitude for His sacrifice for us (2 Cor. 5. 14, 15).

The cost to you is nothing, however, compared to the cost for Him. He gave His very life on the Cross for you, and so He alone has the right to demand that you yield your will to Him. Find a quiet place where you can read Revelation 3. 20, and then in simple trust use the prayer at the top of the next page. You will never regret this step of faith which is the culmination of your search for God, and the beginning of a true, personal ex-

perience of Christ in your own heart, with a deepening desire to serve Him and worship Him in the fellowship of His Church.

### A PRAYER TO HELP YOU

“ Lord Jesus, I admit I am a sinner, and I confess my sins to Thee, especially those upon my conscience.

“ Lord Jesus, I believe Thou didst die upon the Cross to bear away my sin.

“ Having counted the cost, I now come to Thee, and open the door of my heart, and welcome Thee into my life, according to Thy promise, as my Saviour and Lord, for Thy Name's sake, Amen.”

Now read Revelation 3. 20 again, and then St. John 6. 37: “ Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out ”.

If, however, you are still not clear about your personal relationship with Christ, first obtain “ How can I accept Christ ? ” which explains what is written here, with further verses from the Bible, and more Bible-studies, like the two on the next page.

May God bless you, and bring you to Himself.

### FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION

When you have definitely taken this great step of welcoming the Lord Jesus Christ into your heart, your new-found faith will need strengthening. God does this through Bible-study, prayer, church-membership, worship, fellowship, Holy Communion, and personal witness for Christ.

All these are matters in which you will be glad to have help from your vicar, or minister, or from a senior Christian friend, but settle it straightaway in your own mind that you will begin and end each day with a short time of Bible-reading and of prayer to Jesus, your new-found Friend and Saviour. Islington Booklet No. 3 will help you to find assurance, and No. 4 will guide you in methods of prayer and Bible-study, but here are two simple Bible-studies to help you at once.

### **FIRST DAY'S BIBLE STUDY**

**An opening prayer:** "O Lord, open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy Law" (Ps. 119. 18).

**Reading: Psalm 23. The Good Shepherd**

"The Lord is my shepherd" (v. 1). Once we have received Christ into our hearts and trusted Him as our Saviour, we can say "MY Shepherd". See what He says elsewhere about Himself as the Good Shepherd (St. John 10. 9-11, 27-30).

Here are some clear directions:

(1) Discover in this Psalm the twelve things the Good Shepherd will do for you. For instance, from verse 4 we learn that Christ will give us freedom from fear under the shadow of death, His Presence with us in our walk through life, and His help and correction if we go astray.

(2) Apply this picture language to your own prosaic surroundings in life.

(3) Pick out one verse to learn by heart, and to claim as a promise for the day.

### **Prayer**

(1) Turn one verse into a prayer for yourself, your family, and anyone known to you who now specially needs Christ (e.g. verse 1).

(2) Thank the Lord Jesus for becoming your “ Good Shepherd ”, by entering your heart (Rev. 3. 20). A Christian who often thanks God, soon becomes a joyful disciple of Christ.

(3) Here are two verses of a hymn to help you pray. Do not be ashamed of using other people’s prayers, at least until you find it easier to form your own words in prayer.

“ Loving Shepherd of Thy sheep,  
Keep Thy Lamb, in safety keep;  
Nothing can Thy power withstand,  
None can pluck me from Thy hand.”

“ Where Thou leadest I would go,  
Walking in Thy steps below,  
Till before my Father’s Throne,  
I shall know as I am known. Amen.”

### **SECOND DAY’S BIBLE STUDY**

**Reading: St. John 1. 1-14. The Prologue to St. John’s Gospel.**

This majestic passage of Scripture is the Gospel which is read at Holy Communion on Christmas

Day. Jesus is described as the Word of God (v. 1), the Life of God (v. 4), the Light of God (v. 5), and the Glory of God (v. 14).

Study verse 12 carefully. You may often have read it before, but now you have truly committed your life to Christ, the Spirit of God will open your eyes to understand the Bible, and verses like this will have new meaning.

How in this verse do we learn to “believe on His Name?” The verse gives us the answer: “by receiving Him”. If you have received the Lord Jesus into your heart (Rev. 3. 20), then you can claim this promise for yourself, and be sure that you are a child of God, and as such must enter into the obligations, and rejoice in the privileges of being one of His children.

St. John's Gospel is a wonderful book! The Scripture Union produces notes on this Gospel, called “Invitation to Live” (6d.), and I am sure these notes would help you to become regular in your Bible-reading habits, after which you may like to use their graded notes arranged for daily reading throughout the year. Teams of well-known Bible teachers write “Daily Bread” notes for adults and young people, and “Daily Notes” for rather more mature Christians. There are other notes and readings for boys and girls, and quite little children. Ask your vicar or minister about this, and I am sure that he will put you in touch with the Scripture Union, or one of the other societies for promoting Bible study which may have a branch in your own



church. As these booklets now go all over the world, if you have difficulty in getting Scripture Union material, write to Scripture Union Headquarters, 5 Wigmore Street, London, W.1, who will either send you material, or give you the address of your national Scripture Union Headquarters.

## Prayer

In the light of St. John 1. 12, use the Lord's Prayer slowly, pausing after each phrase to add your personal prayer or praise. Rejoice in your new-found faith in the Lord Jesus, your new relationship with God as your Heavenly Father, and your new life through His Holy Spirit.

“ As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him, rooted and built up in Him, and stabilised in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving ” (Colossians 2. 6, 7).

I hope there is enough in this first booklet to help you start along the road of Christian discipleship, but I hope you will also read the other booklets in this series, so that a good start may lead to solid progress.

May God complete what He has begun in you (Philippians 1. 3-6), and bless you richly in every department of your life. MAURICE WOOD.



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